

Sam. B. Rock
S K E T C H E S
O N T H E
A R T O F P A I N T I N G ;

WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE
M O S T C A P I T A L P I C T U R E S

I N T H E
K I N G o f S P A I N ' s P A L A C E a t M A D R I D .

I N A L E T T E R F R O M
S I R A N T H O N Y R A P H A E L M E N G S , K ^N T .
F I R S T P A I N T E R T O H I S C A T H O L I C M A J E S T Y ,

T O
D O N A N T O N I O P O N Z ,
S E C R E T A R Y O F T H E R O Y A L A C A D E M Y O F S A N F E R N A N D O .

T R A N S L A T E D F R O M T H E O R I G I N A L S P A N I S H ,
B Y
J O H N T A L B O T D I L L O N ,
K N I G H T A N D B A R O N O F T H E S A C R E D R O M A N E M P I R E .

Q U I D Q U I D P R A E C I P I E S , E S T O B R E V I S . — H O R .

L O N D O N ,
P R I N T E D F O R R . B A L D W I N , P A T E R - N O S T E R - R O W ,
M D C C L X X X I I .



T H E
P R E F A C E.

TH E exalted merit of the late Sir Anthony Raphael Mengs, first painter to his Catholic Majesty, is such, and is so well known to our nobility and gentry, who have seen his works at Rome, exclusive of that noble specimen of them in his copy of Raphael's *School of Athens*, at Northumberland house, that it would be mere pedantry in me, even were I equal to the task, to attempt entering upon an eulogium of this distinguished artist : besides, some
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information concerning this great character, has already found its way to the public in this country. In Italy, his zealous friend Don Nicholas de Azara, the King of Spain's agent at Rome, has lately published his life, with an account of his works, as well as his writings on an art, which he professed in so liberal and superior a degree: but as this work is voluminous, and that some time must pass before it can make its appearance in an English dress, I have ventured to anticipate the curiosity of the public, by bringing forward this Sketch on the art of painting, with reflections on some of the principal pictures

pictures in the King of Spain's palace at Madrid, more particularly on that famous one, by the divine Raphael, known by the name of *Il Spasimo di Sicilia*. These remarks are addressed to Don Antonio Ponz, secretary of the academy of San Fernando at Madrid, who has annexed them to his description of that palace *. This then is the letter which I have attempted

* Don Antonio Ponz is a sprightly ingenious Spaniard, who, at his return from Italy, published his tour through part of his own country, to which he has added a description of Madrid, the Escorial, and other royal palaces; and not only described the most remarkable curiosities of the parts of Spain he visited, but also

tempted to translate from the original Spanish, as given by Ponz ; and if I have not done it justice, with that elegance

vindicated the national character from the misrepresentations of prejudiced foreigners ; at the same time, fairly giving up the point, with respect to such objects as he thinks stand in need of reformation. As a passionate admirer of the fine arts, he laments the want of improvement in buildings, pictures, &c. in the environs of Madrid, which he enforces in the following patriotic exclamation—" The taste for building country seats near Madrid, is as backward as that of forming collections of pictures, and the *Vago Italiano* is much in the right, when he says, that the inhabitants of Madrid have no taste for such things, or thoughts of the kind. Though cities are ever
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elegance the subject requires, I hope, nevertheless, I have not mistaken the author's sentiments, but rather preserved

so opulent, with immense treasures of gold, if the neighbouring plains are depopulated and void of cultivation, they are deprived of their principal ornament; elegant villas and rural seats being the certain indications of a magnificent capital, as I have often repeated in the course of this work." These travels were bought up with amazing rapidity in Spain, his Catholic Majesty graciously condescended to contribute towards the expences of his tour; and Don Antonio Ponz was afterwards appointed Secretary of the Royal Academy of San Fernando. When I was at Madrid, in 1778, this work then consisted of eight volumes, in 8vo. with a great number of plates, and was to be continued. Having had the

served his ideas with truth ; though, from my not being an artist, I have not been able to adorn it with becoming drapery, enrich it with lively colouring, or set it off with florid language, suitable to that analogy between the painter, the orator, or poet. However, as this letter was not intended by its learned writer as a specimen of eloquence, but more particularly designed for the information of young students, it is to be hoped, that though, to

pleasure of a personal acquaintance with this amiable writer, and being indebted to him for his great attention and civility, I flatter myself he will accept of this trifling token of my acknowledgments.

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the refined critic and accomplished connoisseur, the style of the translator may appear indifferent, even on a subject in which the enlightened writer suspected some obscurity, yet on the whole, if it is thought to convey the spirit and meaning of the learned Mengs, as addressed to the curious artist; the translator, after making every apology to the public, for his deficiency, and want of better abilities, will think himself amply rewarded, and his intention perfectly answered: since, to attain this purpose, he humbly conceives, in treating of the arts, as well as of natural history, the language cannot be too plain and clear,
equally

equally divested of extravagant applause, or superficial and indiscriminate censure. With respect to the art of painting, and the praises bestowed on pictures, a great distinction should be made between the attacks made on our purses, by the interested dealer, and the refined observations of a candid and competent judge, offered to an ingenuous mind. The one, like a tyrant, takes the town by storm, enforces his religion sword in hand, and despoils the inhabitants of their treasure: the other is a mild legislator, who diffuses principles of justice and liberality, and acquires universal estimation.

With

With respect to the fine arts in general, though the translator finds himself unable to express the rapture and admiration he felt, in beholding the superb collection of pictures in the royal palace at Madrid, and the Escorial, as well as the many beautiful remains of antiquity at Rome, and in other parts of Italy, still he had the highest satisfaction, with respect to painting, in contemplating the productions of modern artists, in the accomplished works of Pompeo Battoni, and Antonio Raphael Mengs; the former is now at the pinnacle of glory in Rome, and to the memory of the latter, he is happy in offering these feeble lines,

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not as a tribute to his fame, an attempt to which he is every way unqualified, but as a token of his warmest affection for the art.

Let it further be remembered, in honour of the most Serene Charles III. the present King of Spain, that as a patron of painting, his Majesty nobly walks in the steps of the most Illustrious Emperor Charles V. and the successive monarchs of his line; and that besides having most magnificently rewarded Mengs during his life, he has still further extended his princely generosity to his issue, and portioned his five daughters, and granted pensions to his two sons.

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When we turn our eyes towards this delightful island, let us ever have present, with the deepest sense of gratitude, the signal obligations, which the fine arts owe to his present Majesty, our most gracious Sovereign! the patriotic founder of the Royal Academy, to whose paternal care, magnificent and liberal mind, the arts shine amongst us with unusual splendour, and by the bright example of Sir Joshua Reynolds the distinguished President, and the other learned professors and associates of this academic society, we behold them advancing with hasty strides to a degree of perfection, totally unknown to our predecessors, with the fairest hopes

hopes of arriving by insensible degrees, to the utmost state of improvement, and finally to emulate those admired and perfect models of ancient Greece and Rome.

S K E T C H E S

S K E T C H E S

O N T H E

A R T O F P A I N T I N G.

S I R,

YOU are desirous of having my sentiments on the merit of the most capital paintings, preserved in the royal palace of Madrid, in order to publish them in some of your writings. But though you do me a great deal of honour on this occasion, and give encouragement, by supposing me equal to such a task ; I am, nevertheless, inclined to consider it superior to my abilities, and more difficult

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than you imagine ; particularly with respect to myself, who have no literary talents, nor possessed of a requisite turn to speak with propriety on so delicate a subject.

You are well apprized, that many paintings will not appear in so favourable a light in my eyes, as they may do to many others ; and, on the other hand, I shall more highly admire several works of great men, than common observers ; with this difference, however, that they will find a great number of excellent painters ; that is, all those that are admirable in their sight, from the pleasure they afford them, while I shall discover a very few masters, reducing

ing the list to those few only, who deservedly acquired the title of great.

We all possess a general scale, by which we may value the productions of the fine arts; as every individual, whether learned or ignorant, has more or less a fixed idea, that the fine arts are intended to afford delight by their imitation of known objects, they can therefore bestow their praise in proportion to their sensations and genius. If the execution is of that inferior kind, to make its defects very apparent, they naturally depreciate them; but if a variety of agreeable objects, easily understood, fascinates the eye, they

4 SKETCHES ON THE

as readily applaud them. If the circumstances are more numerous, and that the easy part enables them to unravel the more complex, they rise in their admiration, their self-love is flattered, and they praise, from a spirit of gratitude, in proportion as the objects concur with their chain of ideas, either natural or acquired: thus, the devotee, the libertine, the bigot, the scholar, or the man of the world, all reciprocally express their approbation, as their fancies are affected; but for subjects infinitely sublime, or beyond our general habit of thinking, or reasoning, we in general, rather receive from them a slight impression?

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This being the case, you may easily imagine what a variety of opinions will naturally follow respecting the productions of artists, and how dangerous it is to give our sentiments on such a subject with any degree of sincerity; for every one is passionately attached to his own opinion, in matters that meet his approbation; and is rather displeased that others should censure what he applauds, not from any real attachment, but merely from self-love, as mankind is hurt by superiority in point of discernment; and not having power to overcome reason, in revenge, falls upon the person, by taxing him with opprobrious epithets, such as *calumniator*,

invidious, or at best, of difficult to please, that nothing can satisfy, &c. so that sometimes it is a misfortune to perceive the defects of one's neighbour, and generally a great imprudence to discover them, without necessity : still I am desirous of doing you pleasure ; but yet I shall attempt it, speaking like a painter who is sensible of the difficulties of the art, and the impossibility of possessing it without some imperfections. I have not vanity enough to constitute myself a judge, to criticise the professors of my art ; I assure you I hold them all in great estimation ; even those, whom according to the rules of art, I could considerably comment upon ; but when other motives

motives fail for valuing them, I admire their courage, and the facility with which they have accomplished their works, many of which have no other defect, than that of not having been executed upon better principles. If I enter into any critical reflections, I do it merely with the view of contributing to the public good, as you give me reason to hope. Before I attempt to describe the pictures, I think it will not be amiss to offer some hints on painting in general, that those who are not well acquainted with the principles of the art, may reap some benefit, and form a better judgment of those excellent productions which I am now going to describe.

Painting

Painting has been in all ages so highly esteemed, as you well know, that the ancient Greeks distinguished it by the appellation of a liberal art, ennobling it by this distinction, till finally it has acquired the epithet of a fine art, which it well deserves : but it must be observed, that painting becomes a liberal, or a fine art, respecting the mental powers it exerts, added to those attributes of a generous mind, to which the ancients have affixed the criterion of liberality. It is, moreover, a noble art, inasmuch as it has always opened a career of honour to its professors, of which the kingdom of Spain, as well as other nations, have furnished brilliant examples.

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ART OF PAINTING. 9

The name of a fine art further belongs to painting, with respect to its performances ; since every piece well executed is an assemblage of beauty, without which it will ever be defective.

The noble profession of painting resembles poetry more than any other ; both tending to the same purpose, of instructing, while they give pleasure.

Painting imitates every visible object in nature, not exactly as it is, but according to outward appearances, or might be ; the intention being principally to instruct in giving pleasure. This would not happen if nature
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was copied closely; for the same, or greater difficulties would occur, to comprehend the productions of art, than those of nature: so that the expression given by art is to furnish a clear idea of what nature has produced; and such works will be so much the more valuable, as the idea conveyed will be perfect, distinct, and clear.

Every thing which art produces, exists already in nature, formed either in whole, or in parts; and, though art cannot attain to the perfect imitation of what is within itself perfectly beautiful, yet, as this circumstance so rarely happens, the art of painting may in general be said to
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out-do nature, becauses it unites those perfections which in nature are dispersed, or else disencumbers her from such attributes as may not be necessary to a chosen subject, in objects intended to make a strong impression on our senses. Nature is, besides, so complicated in her various productions, that we often cannot understand her expression, nor easily distinguish her essential parts; but painting, under the description we have assigned to it, gives a clear conception of such objects as nature has originally formed, without fatiguing the mind, and constantly giving pleasure, as every thing that excites our attention, or moves our passions, without ruffling them, always

ways leaves a pleasing sensation; from whence it happens, that the imitation may often yield more delight than the original. In consequence of this I must add, that imitation in painting should not be servile, but ideal; that is, it should imitate those parts of natural objects which give us an idea of the thing we perceive: this is performed by representing the visible signs that determine the essential difference of one object from another, whether of a different nature, or nearly similar; whenever these essential differences are visible, they give a clear idea of their properties, and leave the mind at ease to discern them.

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The subject, like that of a poem, should also ever be chosen from nature; and whether real or fictitious, the event must preserve a line of possibility; even the extreme of beauty or perfection, in an impossible degree, should only be employed in subjects of supposed divinity, in which we fancy a possible existence, which would not take place under any other circumstance. This line of beauty is therefore called *ideal*, as not to be found in the common course of nature; from whence many have supposed that the *ideal* has no reality. A perfect piece of painting—should always have something *ideal*, depending upon a choice of parts, originated in nature, concentrating

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with our ideas, so adapted as to cause a proper effect, when judiciously united by the powers of art. In this depends the talent of the professor to give a picturesque appearance to his ideas, and form such an union as will cause a particular sensation on the spectator.

When, in painting, the choice, imitation, and execution, are adapted to one and the same idea, the composition will certainly be good; and, on the contrary, defective, when these qualities are wanting; nevertheless, the *style* or *manner* will be more or less acceptable, according to the choice of subject which he proposes to follow.

STYLE

STYLE IN PAINTING.

The assemblage of all those parts belonging to the practical part, or the *execution* in painting, constitutes, what I call, the *style* in painting, and forms their absolute character. These styles are infinite, but the principal ones from whence the others should flow, may be confined to a small number; these are the *sublime*, the *beautiful*, the *graceful*, the *expressive*, and the *natural*, without taking notice of the vitiated *styles*, though I do not condemn the authors, since great defects are often annexed to great accomplishments, and even this occasions our follow-

ing their defects, mistaking them for perfections.

With regard to these *styles* above-mentioned, I shall explain myself as well as I am able; though the subject is superior to my strength, and will appear rashness in me even to attempt it: but I do it in hopes of giving an opportunity by this feeble essay, to others, more capable and enlightened, to do more justice to the subject; and I shall look with complacency on those who disapprove of my system, if they offer reflections better adapted to a point, so important to painting and the lovers of the art, in order to distinguish and form a true judgment of those
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who are most deserving of our applause.

SUBLIME STYLE.

By the sublime style, I understand that method of treating the art, suitable to the execution of those ideas, by which it is wished to convey to the spectator peculiar sensations, superior to our natural ideas. The grand point in these compositions, is to combine an unity of ideas, between the possible and impossible; for which purpose, the artist must employ known appearances, and forms of a perfection beyond the line of possibility; and in those parts which he takes from nature, he must

abstract all the signs of mechanism even from nature itself. The mode must be in all parts simple and austere, at least, great and serious. We have no remnants of painting in this style, not having the works of the ancient Greeks, for which reason we are forced to have recourse to the statues, of which the *Apollo-Belvidere*, in the Vatican, may be considered as coming the nearest to this style, which undoubtedly was perfect, as well as the *Jupiter* and *Minerva* of Phidias, at Elis, and Athens. Raphael de Urbino instead of the *sublime*, only attained the *great*; while Michael Angelo gave us the *terrible*; and though they both approached to the *sublime* in their conception and invention,

invention, the forms do not correspond, though the mode of execution, particularly in Raphael, is well suited to the sublime style. Annibale Carracci, by copying closely the forms of the ancient statues, sometimes seems to approach to it, as well as Dominici Zampleri, but without uniting to it a sublimity of idea and manner.

BEAUTIFUL STYLE.

Beauty is the idea formed in our mind of an image, having every possible perfection : perfection never shews itself without producing beauty, nor is there any beauty which
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does not exhibit some good quality or perfection in the object, wherein it is found. Beauty further exalts our comprehension, to the ready conception of these qualities, which, without it, would be hidden, or difficult to discern.

The style suitable to such objects, should be divested of superfluities, but not without its essential properties; and each part should be distinguished according to its character, or more useful part in nature. Nevertheless, the execution should be more diffusive and soft than in the sublime style, sufficient to give a clear idea of a possible perfection.

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This style of beauty is not to be found perfect in the works of the moderns. If those of Zeuxis had not been lost, particularly his *Helena*, perhaps we might have had a precise model of this style. The Greek statues are generally of this class a little more or less, according as their character will admit, and though some express a great variety of affections, such as the *Laocoon*; nevertheless, the line of beauty is transcendent in its different forms, notwithstanding the violence of the expression. Beauty alters its character, according to the subject in which it exists: thus, it aspires to the sublime in the *Apollo-Belvedere*, it is human or heroic in the

the *Meleagar* ; it is a feminine beauty in the statues of *Niobe*, and her daughters ; * it is graceful in the *Apollo*, and *Venus of Medicis*, in the Florentine gallery ; it is very beautiful in the *Castor* and *Pollux* of St. Ildefonso ; the *Wrestlers*, in the gallery of Florence ; the *Gladiator*, in the palace Borguese ; and the *Hercules Farnese*, in Rome : all extremely different in their characters, but notwithstanding their diversity, the line of beauty was never overlooked. The ideas of Raphael seldom rise above the

* When I was at Florence, in 1777, these statues of *Niobe* had just been removed from the Villa Medicis, at Rome, to the Grand Duke's palace, at Florence. J. T. D.

objects

objects that presented themselves to him in nature, and they are void of a certain exquisite attribute. Anibale observed the line of beauty in his figures of men, and Albani in those of women, as did Guido in the heads of women, but more in regard to *form* than *mode*.

GRACEFUL STYLE.

Gracefulness is equivalent to beneficence, from whence I conceive, that those objects which appear graceful, are such as convey an idea of such qualifications. The style, suitable to such attributes, should give to the figure, a moderation in its attitudes, attended with softness, and

and rather inclining towards a mild than an imperious gesture. Its execution should be compleated with ease, variety, and gentleness, but without minuteness.

This was the attribute which the Greeks acknowledged to have been peculiarly the talent of Apelles, and though this artist was endued with a great share of modesty, he boasted of possessing this qualification, saying ingenuously, that others surpassed him in some parts, but none exceeded him in gracefulness; we must however understand, that the idea of gracefulness possessed by the ancients was very different from that of the moderns; ours being, with
regard

regard to painting, compared to theirs, a sort of affectation, which in a perfect beauty would be out of place, consisting in peculiar actions and positions very unnatural, being strained, and almost violent, or similar to those of children, as may be sometimes observed in the works of the great Correggio, and more so in Parmegiano, and others, who followed that style. Amongst the ancients, this did not constitute grace, but a character, of which it may be said, that as beauty is an idea of perfection, grace is that excellence whose intent is, to convey agreeable ideas of beautiful objects.

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The most perfect examples of this style amongst the Greeks, are the *Venus of Medicis*, the *Appollino*, and the *Hermaphrodite*, in the Villa Borguese, and the remains of the beautiful *Cupid* in the same villa; as also the *Nymph*, half robed, leaning on a vase, at St. Ildefonso, and other statues. Raphael possessed every grace in the motion of his figures, but he was rather inelegant in their forms and contours, though his general execution is bold. Correggio may serve as a model in the contours, and the *clair obscure*, and every part understood by the expression of graceful manner; he possessed, in the highest degree, that
quality

quality of which Apelles boasted of, when he praised Protegenes. He used to say, he was equal to him in every thing, but he did not know how to take the pencil from his canvass, giving to understand, that too much labour is hurtful to art, deprives it of spirit and grace, and is contrary to this style.

EXPRESSIVE STYLE.

By expressive style, I mean, that in which *expression* is the most conspicuous attribute of this branch of the art, and requires a bold and masterly manner. Raphael de Urbino is a perfect model in this class, in which he has never been sur-

passed by any one. The ancient Greeks always gave the preference to beauty above *expression*, and would not venture to disturb the form by the effects which the latter would occasion. With regard to other modern artists, none possessed a more perfect *expression* than Raphael, who seems to have drawn the very identical persons he has exhibited; while many other distinguished professors, including even some great men, seem rather to have represented actors, or persons that played the particular parts of such characters, to be seen by other people; this appears from a certain affected attitude, shewing that the mind of the figure represented, was not interested in
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the attitude, but that the desire of the painter was to express a well-placed figure. Some artists of merit have succeeded merely in partial attitudes ; others have been quite cold and inanimate : but Raphael alone is universal in all his characters, and his execution always suits admirably to every *manner*, as I shall further illustrate in my description of the pictures.

NATURAL STYLE.

Though painting in general is intended to give us an idea of nature, I distinguish under this arrangement of styles, those works in which the artist only proposes to

himself that simple and sole idea, without any alteration or preference, of the most exquisite objects of nature itself. Thus, I mean to be understood in speaking of painters, who attach themselves to simple nature, not having had the talent to enrich the object before them, or giving preference to its best subjects, but have only imitated such objects as casually occurred to them, or may be found and observed every day.

I think I may compare this manner of the art with that of poetry, respecting the comic muse, who avails herself of poetic numbers, without the aid of poetic ideas ; some Dutchmen and Flemings have excelled

celled in this line, such as Rembrandt, Gerard Dau, Teniers, and others; but the best examples of it may be produced from the works of Velasquez, and if Titian was superior to this last in colouring, Velasquez had greatly the advantage of him in his disposition of light and shade, as well as aerial perspective, which are principal requisites in this style of painting, since these convey just ideas of the reality; as no natural objects can be supposed to exist, without some bulk, and distance from each other, but they may have a more or less brilliant colour: whosoever wishes to find a more perfect solution of this truth, than
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is to be observed in the works of Velasquez, may see it in nature herself; but its principal parts he will always meet in the works of this great master.

It will be easy to discern the different qualities that belong to this manner of painting, when it is considered that the parts of *imitation* and *execution* are to be consequent to the first idea chosen by the artist. I shall therefore pass over different *manners* of painting, more or less accurate, and that partake in some degree, of those already defined.

VITI-

VITIATED STYLE.

I am fearful that I should give displeasure to a great many lovers of the art, if I were to enter upon the vitiated manner in painting; because they give great pleasure to such as have not refinement sufficient to judge of the real merit of the great masters, and who thus mistake appearances for reality; under this error many have given an hardness to their *manner*, which is the case with some of the scholars of Michael Angelo, instead of the true greatness of that master. The affectation of the Lombard school has thus fallen short of the *grace* of Correggio; the
same

same happens, with a particular stiff manner, adopted by many artists, and highly prized, when, in reality, it was nothing more than an exuberance of natural accidents, by which they conveyed a clear idea to those who could not form one from particular parts, or essential tokens ; their method to attain success in this manner, is by a brilliancy of colouring, variety and counterposition of *clair-obscur*, and chimerical ordinance of light and shade, where it does not exist, so that such performances are more adapted to dazzle than affect the mind. This *manner* has often been followed by such as have even enjoyed a great name, particularly out of Italy, and whose persons

persons I respect from their singular merit in other branches of the art; such as, a richness of invention and genius, and a superior talent to overcome, or slight the greatest difficulties, contenting themselves with some excellency in those parts that were easy to them, without heeding the criticisms of the discerning.

E A S Y S T Y L E.

Some professors have possessed an easy style and graceful manner without being vitiated, in which, none have been greater than Pietro da Cortona, and his scholars, as may be observed in the works of Luca Jordano. These may be called pleasing

ing and popular painters, who have not laboured hard to attain perfection, and have satisfied themselves in giving to every part of the art a sufficient character to distinguish one from another, without aiming at excellence, which is known to a very few, and commonly not to those who bestow rewards upon painters; so that these masters have introduced just as much study into their compositions as might suit the common run of their admirers, without any great exertion on their part to discover it. With respect to the practical part of painting, it consists of five principal parts, which may be subdivided under the heads of *design, clair-obscur, colouring, invention,*

tion, and *composition*. In any performance of the art, the three first principles concur, and may be demonstrated, with respect to their being well or ill performed; but it is not so with the two last, which are very arbitrary, and though they have maxims to serve as a guide, still an ample field remains for vague opinion: from whence the difficulty of laying down rules, that will please every body; and as *invention* and *composition* form the prevailing parts, depending upon election, every one makes a particular choice suitable to his taste and genius, and of course, approves of what he has chosen.

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DESIGN.

D E S I G N.

To enter into a description of all the parts belonging to the art, would swell out this letter to a great length, and be improper on this occasion. I shall, therefore, only add, that the perfection of design, consists in its correctness and exact imitation of the different forms and manner in which objects present themselves to the sight, and in giving them the character intended, and chusing from nature what is proper for the subject.

CLAIR-

CLAIR - OBSCURE.

The beauty of *clair-obscure* depends upon the painter's making a happy distribution of the effects of light and shade, as it is observed in nature, that his works have strength, harmony, variety, and proper degradations, not to tire the eye, either in his representations of light or shade; and finally, that the same *clair-obscure* serves to express the character of the work, whether sprightly or grave, &c.

COLOURING.

The perfection of colouring depends upon a just imitation of the local co-

lours and tones of each body, that the harmony thereof should be supported both in light and shade, and middle tints; every tint having its proper degradation, as it is removed from the light, or the interposition of air, between objects and our vision; finally, that each colour should correspond to its situation, and partake of those accidental appearances observed in nature, so that the whole may have a softness, and mellowness, as well as boldness, justness, and beauty.

I N V E N T I O N .

Invention is the most ample field of painting, by which the artist displays

plays his genius and talents. It is the poetry of painting. When he has fixed on an idea, he should support it continually, to the very last touch of his pencil. It is not sufficient that the painter possesses a happy idea, or fills a large canvass with figures, if they do not all tend to explain his original intention. When the whole does not palpably represent to the beholder the subject intended, and prepares the mind to receive the proper impressions they ought to have, on viewing the different figures ; it will be quite useless to give them strained attitudes, or expressions, to appear a spirited painter ; on the contrary, these excesses are destructive of a fine inven-

tion. To illustrate this point, I shall particularly describe, in speaking of the picture of the *Spasimo* of Sicily, in his Majesty's palace.

COMPOSITION.

By *composition* in painting, we understand the happy assemblage of such objects as are the result of *invention*. These two objects must always go together, as the most agreeable *invention* becomes displeasing, if it is deficient of a harmonious *composition*. The beauty of the latter consists in a just variety, contrast, and ordinance of every part that composes his work; subservient, however, to the correctness of *invention*,

invention, and a due *keeping* of the whole.

Painting has partaken of the same vicissitudes and revolutions as all other sublunary things. It has had its bright period, and its fall, has risen again to a certain degree, and now declines once more. It has not only experienced these alternatives, but has varied even in its fundamental principles; for what was considered at one time as an essential attribute, has been coldly looked upon in a successive age, as of no consequence; besides, there has been a contrariety and difference of opinions in various times, relating to those
points

points which constitute the very art itself.

I join in the opinion, that painting never existed as an art in any country, prior to its establishment under the Greeks, nor ever rose to a higher pitch than it did amongst those people: they practised it, however, on different principles from the moderns, yet the grand purpose always was an imitation of nature.

The Greeks were so enraptured with beauty, that they considered the beautiful part of nature as chiefly worthy of their imitation; so that we may venture to pronounce,
that

that the truly *beautiful* was only found in their school, and supported by them. The great assiduity they bestowed on this single object, prevented them from undertaking those great compositions which have done so much honour to modern artists. Since the most celebrated paintings of Polignotus, Zeuxes, Parrhasius, and Apelles, consisted of an inconsiderable number of figures, their inventions, though ingenious, were simple and confined, and from what we may collect from their statues yet existing, their great compositions, did not form one grand unity, but only an assemblage of figures, which had their particular excellence. Another reason may further
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be assigned for the ancients not using a great number of figures, and that is, that an object, beautiful in itself, requires a sufficient space for exhibition; and, it is agreed, that a number of objects take off the attention that ought to be bestowed on the perfection appertaining to the principal figure.

When the Greek artists had made a progress in their art, sufficient to engage the attention of that philosophical people, they naturally aimed at perfection in their art in imitating nature, but perfect nature; for which reason, they did not extend their views to a variety of appearances, but attended to the perfection
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of them; in this manner they advanced from the 50th olympiad to the 90th, at which period, the greatest ingenuity in the art was displayed; without any thing further wanting, but that graceful manner, which, as I have said, is not properly a perfection, nor beauty, but the idea of the latter, represented with an ease that gives satisfaction to the mind that beholds it. This attribute was reserved for the great Apelles, who flourished in the 112th olympiad, and he carried the art to the highest pitch on the principles of the ancients, which afterwards dwindled into trifles and caprice.

When

When painting revived in the thirteenth century of the christian æra, it found the world clouded with ignorance, and unacquainted with philosophy; so that the early painters employed their time in objects where beauty was not considered no more than perfection. In Italy, where it first revived, they painted the inside of churches, chapels, and cemetaries, wherein they represented the mysteries of the passion of our Saviour; so that the art was no sooner revived, than an ample field offered to shew themselves more copious than perfect; from whence, something of this manner has still continued among the moderns,

derns, as not being designed to please great minds and philosophical dispositions, like the Greeks, but opulent men, or ignorant admirers. The line of art, in our times, naturally recurs to copiousness and facility, adapted to the discernment of those who employ us.

As nothing is permanent, and artists are always making innovations in their studies, exalting whatever is simple, or at times, depreciating what is great, they of course devised methods of surpassing each other; and introduced a system of theory into their compositions, to improve that barbarous style they had worked upon; the first progress

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gress was in perspective, the understanding of which, gave such advantage to composition, that being able to represent objects with so much more accuracy, it emboldened their invention. Domenico Ghirlandayo, of Florence, was the first that corrected his compositions from this improvement, and introduced the grouping of figures, and distinguishing the planes, with their proportionable diminution; he shewed great talents in his works, and yet, did not venture on the *manner* of more modern artists.

About the end of the 15th century, some great geniuses arose, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Giorgione,

Giorgione, Titian, Bartholome di San Marco, and Raphael Urbino. Leonardo da Vinci introduced many refinements; Michael Angelo, from his perfect knowledge of the *antique*, and of anatomy, ennobled the disposition of design, by the justness of his proportions; Giorgione aggrandized it in a more general way, and enlivened his colouring; Titian surpassed them all by a delicate investigation and perception of nature, in point of colouring; Bartholome, applying himself peculiarly to drapery, made great improvement in the cloathing of his figures, without losing sight of the *clair obscure*; and Raphael, possessed of a boldness of spirit proper for the art, comprised

all the improvements of his predecessors and contemporaries, forming a true assemblage of their different perfections, and uniting them happily in one point, according to the justest imitation of nature: by which he surpassed all those of his time, and formed an universal school, where he has ever stood unrivalled. If Raphael was excellent in every branch of the art, yet, even in invention and composition, he was superiorly perfect; and the very Greeks, I believe, would be astonished, could they behold his admirable works in the Vatican, where there is so abundant a collection of every thing great, refined, easy, and correct.

As,

As, among the Greeks, painting had acquired its highest perfection under Zeuxes and Parrhasius, and that Apelles had only to superadd the beautiful manner, as I have before observed, thus, amongst the moderns, nothing was wanting, after the works of Raphael, but that graceful manner which was furnished by Correggio, who gave the finishing touch to modern painting: not only affording delight to the refined and enlightened judges of the art, but enrapturing equally the unimproved beholders of his works.

After these great masters, a kind of pause, or calm, took place, till

the three Carracci * of Bologna shewed themselves worthy of the school of their predecessors, particularly of Correggio, of whom they were the most happy, as well as the first imitators. Anibale Carracci was the most correct designer, and introduced the justness of the Greek statues, with the great line of Lodovico; but he had no talent for refinement, or the philosophical part of his profession. These Carracci established a school of great men, who all followed their *manner*, except Guido, who enriched it with every thing graceful, beautiful, and pleasing. Guerchino introduced a

* Agustin, Lodovico, and Anibale.

peculiar

peculiar style of *clair obscure*, and distinguished himself by his singular display, arrangement, and variety of light.

After these great men, who seemed with such facility to imitate the perfection of their masters, and of nature, came Pietro da Cortona, who was embarrassed to rival his predecessors; however, being naturally blessed with a happy talent, he gave up his thoughts to composition, and studied to attain a fine taste: hitherto all the great masters had observed a kind of symetry, or disposition, adapted to equilibrium, or, like Raphael, according to the history before him; but Cortona as it were detach-
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ed invention from composition, applying more particularly to those objects that please the sight, that is, the contrasts of attitudes in his figures; since which time, it has been the fashion to introduce a number of well disposed figures, no matter, whether they properly belonged to the story or not; a practice, the reverse of the manner of the Greeks, who were very chaste in that particular, introducing few figures, that their beauty might be more admired, while the moderns have crowded the canvass, to hide their own imperfections. The school of Cortona has greatly prevailed, by which, the very character of the art has been altered.

Carlo

Carlo Marati appeared soon after at Rome, and aimed at perfection, but he sought for it in the school of great men, particularly following the Carracci, and though he studied from nature, it appears from his works, that he did not confine himself to their simplicity. This *manner*, so universally adopted in his school, had its merit, though it bordered rather on affectation.

France has also produced great men, particularly in *composition*, in which line, Nicholas Pouffin, since the days of Raphael, has undoubtedly come nearest to the classic style of the Greeks. The style of Le Brun, and of some of his successors, was also

also rich; and while the French school adhered to that of Italy, it produced several great men in the various departments of the art, but some having given a preference to the magnificent brilliancy of Rubens, rather than to the perfect execution of Raphael, they imitated the agreeable objects of nature, as they offered themselves in France, following the manner of Rubens, and formed a style, which, from its life and spirit, as well as novelty, delighted the French nation, while they lost sight of the Italian school. Thus, they formed a school peculiar to themselves, in which, the principle attributes were those I have just mentioned. For which reason, the story

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ry was no longer adopted from the Greek, Roman, or Egyptian page, in the manner of Pouffin, but France furnished every subject, and they adapted its character to every other nation they represented. With respect to the other schools, you will find my opinion of them, when I come to speak of the works of their great masters.

Though I have too slightly touched upon these matters, to give a complete idea of the art, I still am fearful this preamble will rather appear tedious, when merely introductory to a short description of the pictures in the king's palace at Madrid.

PALACE.

P A L A C E.

I could wish that all the fine pictures dispersed in the different royal seats were united, and formed into one grand collection, in the palace at Madrid, and that they were properly arranged in a gallery, worthy of the magnificence of the monarch; in order to address to you on this subject, an essay on the art, from the remote times, down to the present, in which every artist we know of, worthy of notice, might be more or less commented upon, for the information of those who have any curiosity or taste for these matters, and that they might be made sensible

sible of the essential difference existing between them, by which, I should be able to render my own ideas more clear; but the Court having never formed any intentions of such a collection, I shall speak unconnectedly of the great masters of different ages, attaching myself principally to the Spanish painters, whose works are conspicuous in the principal apartments of the palace.

Some of the most distinguished of these performances are in the king's dressing room, particularly by the hand of Velasquez, Spagnolet, and Murillo. But how greatly they differ from each other! What justness, what true distribution of

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clair

clair obscure, in the works of Velasquez. How well he understood the effects of light in shewing the distances of objects one from another, and what a school for an artist to improve himself in studying the works of this great man, to be seen in this saloon, done at three different times, and by considering the happy manner in which he attained such an excellent imitation of nature. The picture of the Seville water-seller, displays his early imitation of nature, and with what spirit he exerted himself in exhibiting the different effects on objects that receive light or shadow, inasmuch, as to occasion rather a dryness and harshness of pencil.

In

In the picture of the feigned Bacchus crowning a few drunkards, his style is more loose and free, copying nature, not as she is, but as she appears to the eye. He is still more bold and animated in his *Vulcan's Forge*, where some of the figures of the workmen are a perfect imitation of nature. But he has given the most perfect copy of nature in the picture of a woman spinning, which is of his last style and manner, and so well executed, that the labour of the hand seems not to have been employed, but that the mind alone conveyed the pencil, in which its merit is singular. Some of his portraits have likewise this

G 2 excellence,

excellence, and form the most perfect model of his school.

Spagnolet was admirable in his imitation of nature, strength of *clair obscure*, freedom of pencil, and in describing peculiar circumstances of the human frame, such as wrinkles, hair, &c. His manner is bold, but he did not equal Velasquez in his distribution of light and shade, not understanding its proper degradations, and the effects of air, though his colouring is more lively, as may be seen by his four pictures over the doors.

In the same apartment, there are pictures of Murillo, in two different
manners:

manners: his first, in those, of the Incarnation, and the birth of our saviour; which, particularly the second, are painted with great boldness, in regard to nature, though performed before he had attained that softness which characterises his second manner, as may be perceived in other pictures in this apartment; particularly in the small one of the nuptials of our lady, and a fine half length of St. James, in the adjacent room.

In the King's drawing-room, there is an excellent picture of Velasquez, representing the Infanta Doña Margarita Maria of Austria, whose portrait Velasquez is drawing; but this ca-

pital piece being so well known, I have nothing to add, only that it is a convincing proof of the effect of imitation from nature, and of the general satisfaction it yields, particularly when the *beautiful*, is not the primary consideration.

I pass over at present many fine paintings of Titian's, dispersed in various apartments of the palace; to speak to you of that most noble picture of Velasquez representing Philip IV. on horseback; where every thing is admirable, as well the horse, as the figure of the monarch, even the landscape is managed with taste; but above all, the graceful ease of the sovereign's head

head is singular, as the very skin seems to shine, and the hair is beautiful, and touched with great lightness. Contiguous to this capital performance, there is another of the Conde Duke of Olivares, in nothing inferior to that of the King's.

Let us now turn our attention to another picture, by the same hand, representing a siege, which was before in that saloon of the *Retiro*, called, *De los Reynos*, and is now in the dining-room of the most Serene Prince of Asturias. This picture comprehends every perfection the subject would admit of, and there is no part, if we except the soldiers lances, which

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is not represented with the utmost skill. In the same apartment, there is a portrait of the Infanta Doña Margarita Maria, and an *Infante* on horseback, both by Velasquez in his best manner, as well as some other portraits of his, in the same room.

In the Prince of Asturias dressing-room, there are three fine pictures by *Spagnolet*, two of them represent a St. Jerom, and a St. Benedict, companions, executed in his brightest manner, in which a perfect command of the pencil may be observed, as well as the most accurate copy from nature, with an uncommon expression in the countenance

tenance of St. Benedict. The third is the martyrdom of a saint, equally excellent, though with more force.

It would be superfluous to speak to you of Rubens, or of his school, of which, there are many pieces in the palace. But one, above others, is remarkable, representing the adoration of the kings, one of his most capital pieces, done by him in Flanders, after his best manner, and afterwards, when he came to Spain, he made an addition to the canvass, to enlarge the picture, and increase the number of figures ; amongst which, he has added his own portrait. This picture contains every perfection the artist was capable of in

in the historical line, and the design is not the most incorrect.

Amongst many fine pieces of Vandyke, there is one representing the apprehending of Christ in the garden, executed with a fine taste, and colouring, as far, as a night-piece would admit of; a half length portrait of the Cardinal Infante, brother of Philip IV. is also infinitely excellent from the justness of its execution, and the graceful ease that attends it, as well as colouring, and fallowness of complexion.

The works of Luca Jordano, are innumerable, of whom, it may be said, he never did any thing amiss; as

as a good taste is every where perceptible in his works, though in an embryo form, compared to the excellent productions of other great men of the Italian schools. On the other hand, he never arrived at perfection, so that his manner will admit of no falling off, without a total debasement of painting, which was the fate of his copiers. The works of Jordan may be classed in two different *manners*, though he often painted indiscriminately, copying from different painters. Some of his pieces have an harshness, like those of Spagnolet, from whom, Jordan learned his art, and copied in his early days; but his general manner, and the most universal, and suited to his taste,

taste, as may be seen in his best pieces, was after Pietro da Cortona. In this style, he executed that admirable fresco painting in the Retiro, and many pictures in the palace; but in other pieces, done afterwards in Madrid, he varied from this style, and in his drapery, copied Paul Veronese, though with less correctness of tints and *clair obscure*; so that his manner became dry, as may be observed in the historical pieces of Solomon, in the palace, done after he had finished painting in the Escorial.

Amongst others in the same palace, there is an half length of our lady, with the child, and St. John, thought by some to be a Raphael, it

is true, the child is perfectly in his manner; the carnation is rather too high, the back ground has a blueish cast, the tunick of our lady is of light carmine, and the veil of a deep blue, all in the character of Raphael, which makes those who do not understand the true merit of his excellence, consider it as an imitation of his manner; there are others in the palace, by Luca Jordano, after the Venetian school, but not so well finished as some would suppose.

Much merit is due to some paintings of *Tintoret*, *Old Palm*, and *Jacopo Basan*, but they are all eclipsed, in my opinion, by those of Paul Veronese, and more particularly by those

those of Titian, after his best *manner*; as this great man was never equalled, or surpassed by any one, in the beauty and perfection of his colouring; it is so very excellent in all his works, that the eye never perceives the labour and ingenuity of the artist, but the whole seems, as if nature herself presented her form on the canvass. The pencil of Titian always moved with freedom, yet, without negligence; every accidental stroke shews accurate design; the force and effect of his *clair obscure*, does not so much depend on the darkness of shadow, or the display of light, as in the proper ordinance of his colouring.

All

All these circumstances may be observed in the picture of Bacchanalians, the figures of which are one third of the natural size: this picture is at present in a closet of the Princess of Asturias; every part of the picture, and the whole of it conjunctly, is so beautiful, that it would be an endless toil to delineate its merit; I can only tell you, I never pass by it without stopping, from the admiration it always causes, in seeing the figure of the woman asleep, which exhibits a matter of wonder and novelty, every time I behold it. The colouring is after Titian's brightest manner, the degradation of tints are marvellous, beyond what I ever saw any where; every part

appears nature individually, yet requires great attention to examine the different objects, and still the great variety accords in one general tone: the local tints of the flesh, in every part, are admirably diversified, and the drapery is equally well disposed, with rich colouring: to speak of its accessory parts---the fine sky, the light clouds, the various hues of verdure, the shades of trees, the ground strewed with plants, all together is spirited, while it is in the justest line of beauty.

Another picture about the same size, representing a festival of sportive Cupids, gathering apples on the trees, is of the greatest beauty, in a perfect

perfect style, and seems to have been done at the same time as the other. The great variety of little Cupids is surprising, as well as the diversity of their hair, in ringlets and curls; above all, the admirable degradation of tints, high finishing, and the sweetness of the back grounds, in proportion as the objects are more or less distant.

These two pictures were in the Lodovisi palace at Rome, and were presented to the King of Spain. They served, according to Sandrart, for a study to Domenchino, Pouffin, and Il Fiamingo, to represent beautiful children. Albani has also introduced a group of these children dancing, in one of his pictures: there are

two copies of these pictures, by Rubens, in the palace, but they are only to be considered, as a book translated into Flemish, which preserves the thoughts, but where the spirit and force of the original is evaporated.

There are many other pictures of Titian, but all of them in his latter time, and some in his old age, when his sight failing, his pencil was not so accurate; though he always preserved the greatest justness of tints. Notwithstanding, the number of these pictures so negligently finished, has been prejudicial to the art; as many scholars have imitated that manner, without reflecting, that Titian had, in his time, been very correct,

correct, and made accuracy and the rule of the art his principal study, while he attained to a great superiority in point of colouring, in which he exceeded all others.

We have few pictures to speak of by Correggio; but as every piece of this accomplished master of the art includes the most enchanting part of it, though we possess but two of them, they may serve to give a perfect notion of his powers. The Madonna dressing the child, and St. Joseph at a distance, seems rather a rough draft, from the striking alterations, perceptible in the position of the child and the Madonna. It is surprising to behold the wonderful effect

effect of a figure less than two palms, seen at a distance, appearing considerable, and to swell on the eye; but this does not arise from the harmony of the *clair obscure*, so much as the imperceptible middle-tints, which counteract the light with the shadow, and the masterly management of each, by which he so justly expressed the relief and roundness, almost to make one forget, that the superficies was a plane.

If Titian was happy in his tints, and the local colour of his objects, Correggio, on the other hand, though less perfect in this respect, exceeded him greatly in the fine relief which he gave to his figures,
and

and to every part of the body, as well as his artful disposition of aerial perspective, not only by the gradations of *clair obscure*, with respect to intermediate distances, but also by a peculiar conception of the true nature of the atmosphere, which being more or less diaphanous, receives the rays of light, and penetrating into different bodies, communicates it in those parts where the principal ray of light does not reach, and thus forms a kind of ambient, which makes us perceive objects, even in some degree of darkness, and enables us to distinguish their distances from each other. This was perfectly understood.

stood by the Greek artists, as may be observed by the paintings dug out of Herculaneum, even the most common ones, inasmuch, that it appears to have been a system of their school. Amongst the moderns the most accomplished, in this line, were Correggio, Velasquez, and Rembrandt.

To return to our picture, the child is most perfect, not only by the disposition of *clair obscure*, but also in colouring, design, and gracefulness. Correggio perfectly understood the justness of out-lines in his sketches, and to give the contours a true proportion, with that
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of the body, a most difficult task, and only understood, in an equal degree, by Michael Angelo and Raphael. The Greeks considered this part of painting as the most difficult, as may be seen in Pliny, book xxxv. chap. x.

“ To delineate the body, and give
 “ force to the central parts, is
 “ certainly an arduous task, but in
 “ which many artists have acquired
 “ great fame. To exhibit the ex-
 “ tremities, and preserve the out-
 “ line judiciously, is what few
 “ have succeeded in; even the con-
 “ tour should be supported, so as to
 “ give an idea of what was beyond
 “ it,

“ it, and seemingly to shew what it
 “ hides from our sight *.”

The other picture, representing our Saviour at prayer in the garden, is also small, but accurate and well finished. At first sight, we only perceive Christ and the angel in a full light, all the rest being obscured by the darkness of night; but when

* Corpora enim pingere et media rerum, est quidem magni operis: Sed in quo multi gloriam tulerint. Extrema corporum facere, et desinentis picturæ modum includere, rarum in successu artis invenitur. Ambire enim debet se extremitas ipsa, & sic desinere, ut promittat alia post se: ostendatque etiam quæ occultat.—C. Plinii Secundi Nat. Hist. Lib. xxxv. cap. x.

we examine it more closely, the gradations are happily exhibited according to the effect of nature when, in a faint light, where we just perceive objects near us, and cannot distinguish the more distant ones. Those that went to seize our Saviour are not perceived, nor are there any fine touches of the pencil till that part where the apostles are, then the eye begins to distinguish the leaves and branches; even the plants under foot, as well as the crown of thorns, and the cross on the ground, become conspicuous in proportion as they are nearer to the light, or the eye. The resplendency on the countenance of our Saviour, gives spirit to the whole, but

it comes from the sky, and reverberates on the angel.

This idea, which is noble, and with propriety is most happily executed by the great master, who alone was able to do it justice. At present, these pictures are in the princess's closet, with those mentioned before by Titian. There are in the same place, some by Leonardo da Vinci; one of them in his best *manner*, representing two children playing with a lamb; this latter none of the best performed; another, with a head of St. John, when young. In these pictures we find the great judgment of the artist respecting light and shade, and its gradations
from

from its fullest splendour, till darkness, accompanied with peculiar easy and pleasing attitudes, which seem to have paved the way for Corregio to attain to that graceful manner, which distinguishes his works.

There are pieces in this closet attributed to Raphael. Of his invention, there is a holy family with figures, about half natural size, and seem to be of those performances, which, with his drawings, formed his best scholars. There is another picture of a *Madonna*, holding the child, in the same style of composition as that famous one in the gallery of Florence, known by the name of *Madonna de la Seggiola*, with this difference,

ference, that, in this I am speaking of, St. John is wanting; it is square, and that of Florence is oval, and the figures as large as nature. This picture in the palace seems to have been re-touched by Raphael, but more in the nature of a rough draft than a finished piece. The head of the Madonna, in particular, is his, and has equal merit with any of his works, being full of life and spirit.

But how shall I explain to you that beautiful picture, in a manner it so highly deserves, known in Sicily, by the name of our lady *dello Spasimo*; you know, that Raphael painted it for a church in Sicily of
that

that name; the ship, according to Vafari, was lost, but the picture was recovered without damage, from the wreck. In all times it has been highly valued by true judges; and Agustin the Venetian, engraved it, though without giving the least glympse of its beauty. The Count Malvasia, speaks of it with slight, but of this author we may judge from his own writings, which shew little knowledge in the profession; and if he relied on the opinions of some painters, they were such, and their distance so great, from the divine Raphael, that they were unqualified to pronounce on the merit of that great man, or much less, to understand,

the principles on which we are to prize the works of this illustrious artist*.

It appears beyond contradiction, that the most noble part of the profession, is not that, which consists in giving pleasure to the eye, or affording a mere entertainment to the ignorant observer; but, in the more liberal effusions it causes on the mind, rousing the generous passions, and affecting the very soul: this being admitted, as I suppose it will, we must undoubtedly class Raphael at the head of those, whose works are preserved down to the present time. The fertility of his genius,

* See Appendix.

and

and the display of his ideas, shew themselves on the first view ; thus, the tranquil, the tumultuous, the amorous, the serious, or the chearful, have nothing but what are adapted to the sentiment by which our sensibility is moved in the same feeling manner, as by the eloquence of the orator, or the numbers of the poet.

Moreover, he has insinuated, in every figure, the preceding scene, as well as the immediate action, and we seem to understand what is to follow. The determinate action never appears conclusive, but rather just beginning, which gives such a spirit, from this happy manner, that every thing seems, as it were

were, in motion. In effect, if we examine the picture of the Spasimo, in all its parts, we are sensible, that if Raphael was not always great in each of his works, we might reckon this performance as an *unique* from its surprising beauty.

You know, that the subject of this picture is taken from scripture, when the women wept on seeing our Saviour bearing the cross to Mount Calvary; and he said to them, foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children!* To give more grace to his composition, Raphael has added a distant view of
Mount

Mount Calvary, winding to the right, where it is thought our Lord fell the first time, when a ruffian pulls him by a rope, tied round his waist. It is to be supposed, that this picture being intended for the church before mentioned, the friars who were to have it, were desirous, that the blessed virgin should be represented; or it might have been the choice of the painter; be that as it may, Raphael well knew how to give every figure its utmost grace and dignity, and to treat his subject with infinite majesty.

Having to represent on this occasion, the figure of a mother, of
one

one going to the place of execution, and treated impiously by the people, he chose the unhappy state of an afflicted mother, obliged to intercede with an infamous mob, to have compassion on the sufferer. In this distress, Raphael has painted our lady kneeling, not looking towards her son, to whom she could give no relief, but in the act of the most efficacious supplication, representing, that having fallen, he is in need of the pity of him, who is pulling him by the rope, in order to rise. To this humble posture he gives a *relief*, by placing near her, Mary Magdalen, St. John, and the other Marys, who condole with her, and
give

give succour to the mother of their lord, supporting her in their arms.

These figures are highly expressive of the deepest concern for the sufferings of our saviour, particularly Mary Magdalen, who seems, as it were, speaking to Jesus Christ, while St. John is giving aid to our lady. Jesus Christ, though fallen, is not dejected, nor faint, on the contrary, seems to threaten, by what he utters, just as it is expressed in holy writ, his countenance, besides being in this piece of an excellence, and beauty almost incomprehensible, appears inflamed with a prophetic spirit, perfectly adapted to the subject, not only as the Son of God; though
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in sufferance; but also suitable to the genius of Raphael, who never painted any feature indifferently, when the character could possibly be represented with dignity.

The whole action of the figure is noble and animated; the left arm, with a fine hand, leaning on a stone, is quite extended; but the irregular folds of the sleeve, shew the suddenness of the fall, and seem as it were, yet in motion, as if they had not recovered from the pressure ensuing from the weight. With the right hand, Jesus Christ holds the cross fast, as if unwilling to yield it to the figure that seems aiming to ease him of it; a thought most worthy
of

of the great Raphael, who, in an action, which to many would appear indifferent, recollected that, Jesus Christ suffered for our sins, because he chose to do so.

The variety is no less admirable, which he has diffused in the countenances of the executioners, exhibiting even in these, the different stages of wickedness. That figure with his shoulders towards us, pulling Jesus Christ by the rope, shews his only passion to be, a brutal desire of hurrying on, to the place of execution; the other, who lays hold of the cross, seems touched with some degree of compassion, and willing to relieve the sufferer: near him a soldier,

dier, placing the cross with his hand on the shoulders of our lord, and lifting his lance with a threatening gesture, expresses the utmost inveteracy, and desire to oppress the lord still more after his fall.

All these reflections tend to illustrate the *invention* of the painter, which, certainly, does the greatest honour to the art, and evinces the imagination and strength of fancy of the artist, who, when he arrives to that perfection which Raphael did, certainly will deserve the appellation of *great*, as much as the orator or poet; but it is necessary I should distinguish what I mean by perfect *invention*, which does not
 consist

consist only in a fine thought, or one that is proper, or perhaps just, but in that unity of a continued idea which takes possession of the professor, and afterwards of the beholder, which idea should fill the mind of the artist, from his first outset to the last stroke of his pencil, forming one complete whole, to the very last moment of the work.

Many other artists, who, to general observers, have been thought to possess an inventive faculty, have been totally ignorant of these peculiar circumstances, so perceptible in the works of Raphael, from not distinguishing between real *invention*

and *composition*, the first being the essence and poetry of a picture, already conceived in the mind of the painter, who represents it, as if the object had been before him, and the whole had literally happened in his presence, just as he had formed it to himself, in his poetical ideas.

Composition, on the other hand, is a subsequent arrangement of these very ideas, which had previously taken place; from this error having arose in the school of painters, and lovers of the art, they have injudiciously mistaken the grand design of painting, as if only to please the eye with a variety of subjects and characters, instead of its more noble attribute, arising

arising from *expression*, and its effect on the mind, proceeding from *invention*.

Some ignorant persons have even had the rashness to advance, that Raphael did not understand *composition*, because they only considered some pictures of *Madonnas*, and never attended to his magnificent works in the Vatican, or his cartoons intended for tapestry, of which the Duke of Alva possesses a capital collection in Madrid; but if neither these, or the prints from his works, could be seen here, the very picture I am speaking of, must convey the highest opinion of his surprising genius and talents. Who knew better than him to give a

a proper *equilibrium* to his compositions, the *pyramidical* form to his groups, and that *contrast* of *alternative motion*, to the different parts of his figures, in an infinite variety of directions, so as to give animation to every part of his divine works? Who knew better to ascertain the proper number of figures to be placed on the canvass, so that none should be idle or supernumerary? If their attitudes frequently indicate repose, it was in concord with the intention, to define the thought alluded to, it being very unlikely to suppose a person represented in a calm or tranquil state, or pensive mode, should have the agitation of a gladiator, in the moment of combat. Thus
the

the character of dignity, as well as the plebeian, the old, the young, with every diversity of natural or accidental attributes, should be distinguished in chaste composition, as they are found in Raphael, this being a faculty depending on invention.

The *design*, which is the most efficacious part for the painter to express his ideas, is also beautiful in this picture, as indeed in all the works of Raphael; and if he did not arrive to that pitch of beauty of the Greek statues, it arose from the great difference of customs in those days from the present, as well as the diversity of opportunities and objects, on which he exercised his talents;

lents; but if the ancient Greeks had had occasion to paint an executioner standing near Christ, they could not have done it better, or with more propriety, than the one with his back towards us in that picture. If a rustic shape is deemed proper for such a figure, how improper it would be to give him the elegant form of the *Borghese gladiator*, which would draw off the attention of the spectator from the principal figure, as it happens in that famous picture of Domenichino, in the chapel of St. Andrew, in the church of St. Gregory at Rome, in which, every body admires more the figure of the executioner, who is giving stripes to
the

the faint, than the faint himself, who should be the chief object, as the hero of the piece; an error which is generally observed in almost all the great painters who flourished since the beginning of the 17th century. Whoever chuses to observe in the antique, a character where the beautiful form is not attended to, let him view the statue of the *Arrotino*, or *Knife-whetter*, in the gallery of Florence, and he will perceive, that he does not discern in his shape or figure, the form of the wrestler, the filenus, or of the gladiator above-mentioned; on the contrary, he will find the shape of his body much inferior, and irregularly

larly proportioned, when compared to those I have referred to.

Nevertheless, whoever studies the *design* of Raphael, as well in this picture, as in his other works, will always find the precision and spirit of the ancients; that is, to have ever delineated the essential parts of the human frame, with correctness and just proportion, giving force to the striking character, and gently touching the insignificant or superfluous parts; but what renders the pencil of Raphael marvellous, is his adherence to truth in his personages, who so scrupulously correspond with the actions they are intended

intended to represent, that they seem not as if by accident, but by natural inclination, to act the part which Raphael has allotted to them; and this is not only discernable in the countenance, which is the type of the soul, but in the very attitude of the body, and every respective part thereof.

In this figure, with his back turned towards us, he has represented an ordinary person of a muscular form, and of a coarse make, as vulgar characters of no talent generally are, though without expressing any particular passion; on the contrary, in the other two, he has stamped a strong impression on their countenances,

tenances, and given them a more correct shape; but above all, he has thrown a beautiful expression on the countenance of Christ, without wavering from regularity, or the dignity suitable to the physiognomy; the essential parts of the bones and muscles are ascertained, with a delicacy that does not break in, or disturb the grand line of the whole; the same truth is observed in the neck, and in the hand on which he leans, and though the action of leaning swells the flesh, and in a manner hides the bone and joints; he has, nevertheless, so justly expressed the thumb and the fingers, and made them so corresponding to the character of the head, that if it had
been

been done by the most famous Greek artist, who might have in view to give a character in a medium between Jupiter and Apollo, he could not have succeeded better, as it corresponds with that of Jesus Christ, adding the expression of passion, in which he is represented.

I shall not enlarge further in describing the various contours, and that general ordonnance of every part, as they appear in proper gradations, with the most perfect intelligence: infomuch, that the observer seems, as it were, to see almost through the canvass. The proper position of the heads, always suited to the action, are in the character of

L Raphael,

Raphael, and we may be well assured, when we find any thing inferior to the rest in his school, that the same was begun by some of his pupils, from the great weight of business on his hands, and that he was obliged to correct it himself: therefore, such pieces, in reality, should not be attributed to him.

Having thus examined the most valuable picture in the palace, with respect to the most noble part of the art, containing, in a very sublime degree, the most exalted ideas in painting; we may turn our attention towards other excellent pictures in a more easy style, in which many of the great difficulties
that

ART OF PAINTING. III

that occur are done away, though a true and just expression is preserved in the whole; I speak of the fine works of Lanfranc, amongst which, the funeral of an Emperor is capital, with a combat of gladiators. This piece contains a perfect study of the most excellent principles of the art: in the out-line there is a general idea of the construction of the human body, which forms the beauty of the antique. The expression of Raphael is united to the ease and *clair obscure* of Correggio, but rather indicated, than thoroughly finished. A sea-fight, in boats, is also a fine picture, as well as a sacrifice, and some others of this painter.

There are many other paintings of the different schools, but not equal to those I have mentioned to you. Some of Pouffin's; and amongst others a beautiful bacchanalian, the figures of which are less than a foot in height. This piece is well finished, of a good design and colouring, with women and beautiful children dancing. The landscape is as beautiful as can be expected. This painting, first intended for the lid of a harpsichord, was afterwards enlarged either by Pouffin, or his brother-in-law Gaspar.

It were to be wished, that young painters would be stimulated by
emulation

emulation and ardour to avail themselves of these master-pieces of the art, which I have described, not only in copying them, but also in imitating them, wherein I make a very essential difference, for the mere copying of a piece, seldom enables the artist to produce a similar performance of his own composition, if he does not study the system and invention of the original, and investigate the full scope of the design, by which alone he will reap improvement in studying the great works before him.

In every painting we discover two essential parts; first, the propriety and connection of the whole, by

which we see the author's drift and intention; secondly, the ordonnance and good keeping of the performance. In general, those who copy, or pretend to study the works of great men, chiefly aim at literally following the appearances before them; this I call the *manner*: hence it happens, that if the original is taken away, and they are under a necessity of performing a piece in which different circumstances are required from those before them, they are in a maze; whereas, those who study with more penetration, and endeavour to seize the true spirit of the original, with an ardent desire to imitate their genius and talent, by degrees

grees arrive at a higher pitch of fame, and are enabled to produce copies worthy to be considered as true imitations of the original, from having closely attended to the ground work, and principles of those great masters, and being sensible thereof, may equally apply them with judgment in circumstances that offer, without a charge of plagiarism.

It is thus, I would recommend to young painters, to study the works of the great masters, not as servile imitators, but with a view to investigate, for a model, those parts of nature which they preferred; fully convinced, that nothing is commendable, even from the pencil

cil of the most eminent professor, when it is not conformable to nature. Having acquired a tolerable freedom in the copying of their works, let him then study nature; but even here, let him not wander indiscriminately in the immense field she offers, but rather follow the path of those masters he has chosen for his guide, and by having studied their beauties, learn to imitate them.

By this means, ~~they~~ they will acquire reputation, if their natural talents assist them, and though they may not equal those masters, whose school they attach themselves to; yet they still may attain a tolerable share of applause;

applause ; for nature is so variegated
 and inexhaustible, that to every talent,
 it offers some proportions, that it will
 be sufficient, to study her with eru-
 dition and discernment, in the
 manner I have endeavoured to ex-
 plain, to the best of my abilities,
 as far as my want of practice in
 writing on such subjects would per-
 mit. Finally, the whole scope of
 this treatise, may be reduced to a
 familiar letter, wrote with a good
 intent, but with little opportu-
 nity of making it more complete,
 which my want of talent in this
 line, renders very incorrect. You
 will please therefore to offer every
 apology for me to the public, and
 make amends by explanations of your
 own,

own, for such parts as may appear obscure; since, to render it more intelligible, I should be under the necessity of forming it into a book of precepts, which I never should have resolution to undertake.

Be thankful for the sketch I now offer you, which is all my occupations permit, more useful than my writings; and command me at all times, who am devoted to your service, with truth and esteem, &c.

D. ANTONIO RAPHAEL MENGES.



APPENDIX

A P P E N D I X

OF THE

T R A N S L A T O R.

I AM indebted to Don Antonio Ponz, for the following extracts, relating to the contest between Malvasia, and the Spanish painter Victoria, concerning the famous picture of the *Spasimo*, or *The Agony*, in which, the learned Spaniard defends the character of Raphael against the invidious attacks of Malvasia. I hope, therefore, that the English reader will not be displeased with the translation of these passages, as a further supplement to what Mengs has offered in commendation of that famous picture.

The

The remarks of Malvasia are as follow, after comparing Raphael with Guido Aspertini: “ As for
“ example, the tapestry executed
“ from the designs of Raphael,
“ exhibited over the altar, in the
“ chapel royal at Madrid, which
“ we cannot look at without being
“ astonished, not to say scandalized,
“ to see the representation of Christ
“ bearing his cross to Mount Cal-
“ vary, done by the same hand,”
“ (Raphael.) Notwithstanding that,
“ Philip IV. prompted by the extra-
“ vagant praises given to the picture
“ by Vasari, after having received it,
“ settled an annual income of a thou-
“ sand crowns on the monks of Pa-
“ lermo, to whom it had belonged,
“ leaving

“ leaving to the superior of the con-
“ vent the care of forwarding it ;
“ a dangerous undertaking, from the
“ accident that had happened before.”

To this the Canon Victoria an-
swered, “ King Philip, our sove-
“ reign, was an excellent judge of
“ painting, and practised it occa-
“ sionally for his amusement, always
“ entertaining at his court the most
“ celebrated professors, who were
“ able to pass a proper judgment on
“ such matters, and his majesty so
“ highly esteemed this picture, that
“ in preference to all the others, he
“ used to term it, *La Joya, the*
“ *Jewel.* There are many other
“ good judges in Sicily, in Rome,

M

“ and

“ and other places, as well as paint-
“ ers, who have examined and copi-
“ ed this picture, and they all agree
“ in its infinite beauty ; infomuch,
“ that there had like to have been
“ an insurrection at Palermo, when
“ an attempt was made to remove it,
“ and had it not been for the sagacity
“ and prudence of the superior, this
“ never could have been effected.”

Victoria, in his second letter, says,
“ These and other idle tales I omit,
“ not to trouble you with such
“ trifles. They are displayed by the
“ author (Malvasia) in his works,
“ in order to deprive Raphael of the
“ glory arising from this perform-
“ ance, which is a very weak at-
“ tempt

“ tempt, not to add an envious
 “ one, for those who understand any
 “ thing of painting. For our parts,
 “ in Spain, we greatly admire this
 “ picture of Raphael, in the royal
 “ chapel in Madrid, where Christ
 “ is seen bearing his cross to Mount
 “ Calvary, in which the passion of
 “ our Saviour is represented with
 “ infinite grandeur and strength of
 “ expression and colouring, as well
 “ as the affliction of the Maries, as
 “ described by Vasari. . Notwith-
 “ standing the great merit of this
 “ picture, the author nevertheless
 “ depreciates it, and calls in ques-
 “ tion the judgment of Vasari, and
 “ would fain persuade us, it is so
 “ wretched, that he cannot look at

“ it without being scandalized ; and
“ that Philip IV. of glorious me-
“ mory, in acquiring of it, and
“ bringing it to Madrid from Paler-
“ mo, misapplied his generosity in
“ lavishing a thousand crowns per
“ annum on the convent of our lady
“ Dello Spasimo, for the purchase of
“ this admirable performance.”

This Don Vicente Victoria, was a canon of Xativa, now called *St. Phelipe*, in the kingdom of Valencia, and a warm advocate for the Roman school, being himself a disciple of Carlo Maratti, and an eminent painter, as appears from his works in the church of St. Francis, in the city of Valencia ;
he

he particularly shewed his great judgment in the art, by a treatise which he published at Rome, in 1703, in Italian, entitled, *Osservazioni sopra il libro della Felsina Pitrice*, dedicated to the lovers of painting; in which, he vindicates, in seven different letters, the character of Raphael, and the glory of the Roman school, from the aspersions of Count Malvasia, whose chief aim is to extol the school of Bologna. The book of Victoria remained for a long time unanswered, at last, a new champion appeared on behalf of Malvasia, in the person of John Peter Zanoti, a painter of Bologna, who answers the six letters of Victoria, and to the seventh adds, that he agrees with him in his

opinion. From the account which Don Antonio Ponz gives us of the contest, the advantage seems to lean on the side of his countryman, who enjoyed a very high reputation at Rome. Besides his taste for painting, and being a celebrated antiquary, and member of different academies in Italy, he was also a tolerable poet, and wrote verses in the Italian language, as well as in Spanish. There is an altar-piece of his in Rome much esteemed, in the church of the conception of *Campo Martio*. Ponz has also given his portrait. "Viage de España par D. Antonio Ponz, tom. iv. car. 5. --- Madrid, 1774."

Page 63. As the Spanish painter Joseph de Ribera is generally known
to

to us by the name of *Spagnolet*, I have made use of that expression only, as it was a term of affection given him at Rome, in token of his merit; styling him by way of superior distinction, *Il Spagnoletto*.

Page 83. I acknowledge not to be satisfied with my attempt to translate the passage of Pliny, quoted by Mengs on this occasion; particularly with respect to the words *media rerum*, and I am as much at a loss as before from Mengs interpretation, who defines it *los medios de las cosas*. For such of my readers who understand Spanish (on whose indulgence I must more particularly rely if I have not done the

author

author more justice in this work)
I shall annex Mengs translation of
the passage in question in the ori-
ginal Spanish, which is as follows :

“ Porque pintar los cuerpos, y los
medios de las cosas, es cierto ser
grande obra : pero en esta han al-
canzado muchos fama : mas hacer
los extremos de los cuerpos, y cer-
rar el modo de la pintura de fuerte
que relevada parezca acabarse alli,
es cosa que raras veces se halla en
los que usan esta arte. Porque la
misma extremidad se tiene de abrazar
a si, y acabar de tal fuerte, que prometa
otras cosas detras de si, y que muestre
tambien lo que oculta, y cubre.”

T H E E N D.



E R R A T A.

- Page 19, line 8. *For Dominici, read Domenico.*
— 31, line 2. *For Gerard Dau, read Gerard Dou.*
— 34, line 13. *For ordinance, read ordonnance.*
— 42, line 2. *After describe, dele comma, and
add my sentiments.*
— 42, line 15. *For ordinance, read ordonnance.*
— 45, line 7. *After artists. dele full point, and
read artists ;*

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